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SUBJECT: TURKEY INCREASES AID FOR TSUNAMI RELIEF

REF: State 8943

1. Summary: The Turkish government announced that it will increase its tsunami assistance from \$1.25 million to \$5 million, bringing total donations public and private to about \$9 million. One government official estimated that total donations would reach \$30 million by the end of January. Prime Minister Erdogan is planning to travel to the region February 2-3. End Summary.

2. Turkey was one of the first countries to announce aid to Tsunami-affected countries, disbursing \$1.28 million to the governments of Indonesia (\$ 600,000), Sri Lanka (\$ 350,000), Maldives (\$ 100,000), Thailand (\$ 125,000) and Malaysia (\$ 75,000), and \$30,000 to UN-OCHA for Somalia and the Seychelles. On January 12, Foreign Minister Gul announced that the Turkish government will increase its aid to \$5 million, and that public donations from Turkey have reached about \$4 million. However, he expressed disappointment with donations from the public, and urged the press and other organizations to raise public awareness and encourage donations. Prime Minister Erdogan's AK Party is leading a fund-raising campaign; Erdogan donated a month's salary.

3. Turkey's Red Crescent has received donations of \$2.4 million, and the Presidency of Religious Affairs is hoping to collect donations during the January 21 Friday pray services. A number of municipalities, NGOs and business groups have organized fund-raising campaigns. The Turkish Exporters Assembly pledged \$1 million of assistance; an air freight firm, TNT Express, announced that it would provide free-of-charge shipment of aid materials to the region in addition to pledging EUR 1.5 million to the campaign; and the Ankara Cloth Industry Association announced that it would donate \$360,000 worth of clothes to the survivors.

4. Prime Minister Erdogan assigned Turkey's Emergency Management Authority (TEMA) to coordinate Turkish aid, including the coordination of a number of Turkish relief teams in the region. TEMA Deputy Director General Alparslan Kavaklioglu told Econ Specialist that they were anticipating that Turkish donations will reach \$30 million by the end of this month. Kavaklioglu said two military cargo planes carrying medical materials, medicine, water treatment chemicals and clothes will depart Turkey for Indonesia and Sri Lanka on January 16th and will be joined by a 37-man joint Ministry of Health/Turkish Red Crescent team. He added that Prime Minister Erdogan was planning to travel to six of the South Asian countries around February 2-3.

5. A number of Turkish relief teams are already at work in the region. Turkish Red Crescent has set up offices in Thailand, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. The Turkish special search and rescue team GEA joined search and rescue efforts in Sri Lanka and has now formed a formed a mobile medical service team in northeast Sri Lanka. The Lions-Turkey Natural Disaster Action Group (LIDAM) sent a group of four people to Trincomalee region of Sri Lanka and is helping provide safe drinking water. The Association of Social and Economic Solidarity with Pacific Countries established an aid camp in Aceh and is providing food for around 1,000 people daily. Konya Municipality sent a team of three doctors and two employees to Sumatra to provide medical aid and serve food.

6. Embassy passed reftel information on the U.S. proposal for a Tsunami warning system to MFA. Alp Atakan of the MFA International Organizations Section told us MFA was unsure at this point what involvement Turkey would have in upcoming meetings of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction and the Group on Earth Observation.

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